

NEWS FROM: The Township of Lower**Press Release – For Immediate Release – June 2, 2014**

Contact: Mike Voll, Township Manager
609-886-2005
manager@townshipoflower.org

Voice of the People Heard at Public Meeting on Beach Drive Improvements

It was democracy at work during a May 31 public forum when member of the public came out to voice their opinion of a \$900,000 Cape May County Open Space grant that would have provided for a sidewalk along the dune side of the street to improve public safety and beach access.

Councilman Jim Neville, who represents the ward the project would have been in, told the crowd of residents that he appreciated their concerns and would ask council to rescind the resolution to go before the county to ask them for the money for the project.

“I want you know that we hear you,” said Neville in response to the statements against the project. “And you’re telling us that you don’t want this.”

Colleen Crippen, Lower Township’s grants coordinator, gave an overview of the proposed project, CAFRA permitting and the timeline that led up to the township approving a resolution to ask the county for Open Space funds to pay for the project. To help the public with any questions pertaining to the project the proposed plans were on display throughout the meeting room. A representative from the police department, Steven Morey, a member of the township’s recreation advisory board and Stewart Farrell, director of Stockton College’s Coastal Research Center were on hand to give presentations and answer any questions. In addition, Mayor Michael Beck and Deputy Mayor Norris Clark attended the meeting with Councilman Neville.

The six-foot wide sidewalk would have run for about 1.5 miles from Lincoln Boulevard to Avalon Road and had support from the township’s Police Department and the state Department of Environmental Protection. The project would have also included painted crosswalks to the beach, handicapped access ramps, and some stop signs to improve public safety and beach access on Beach Drive and Shore Drive. Residents suggested other ways to increase safety and beach access, such as the possibility of making the roadway a one-way street to allow more room for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Councilman Neville said that he would talk to Police Chief William Mastriana and Public Works Superintendent Gary Douglass on how they could implement the residents’ suggestions.

Mayor Beck also thanked the residents for sharing their feelings on the project and offering possible solutions to ease safety concerns for the area.

Councilman Neville said he would formally ask council to rescind their application to the county during their upcoming council meeting on June 16.